



# National Dialogues on Coastal Stewardship

## Introducing the National Dialogues

Our coastal areas are invaluable for their economic vitality and remarkable biological diversity. Yet, because more than half the people in the U.S. now live and work within 50 miles of the coast, these areas are under tremendous pressure. Coastal habitats are being degraded and lost; harmful algae blooms are more numerous; fisheries are overexploited, and seafood consumption advisories have increased.

*The "health" of the coast is imperiled, and many share responsibility for its care. To bring these stakeholders together, the National Ocean Service (NOS) of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has invited partners from industry, environmental organizations, academic institutions, and other levels of government to participate in the "National Dialogues on Coastal Stewardship."*

### Tangible Outcomes of the National Dialogues

- Better understanding of problems and solutions
- New and stronger working partnerships
- Refinements in products and/or services to meet the needs of customers and stakeholders

## A Coastal Partnership

The National Dialogues bring together diverse partners to focus on the most important coastal and oceanic issues. They employ systematic approaches and interactive problem solving, and build partnerships and a sense of community

### What is coastal stewardship?

- Stewardship is the sum of ethics, behaviors and actions
- Every person and organization can be an environmental steward

between stakeholders. Through these dialogues, tangible outcomes can be achieved that may not be attainable in any other way.

### Participants in the National Dialogues

The National Dialogues give people and groups who, in the past, were unable to address the future of oceans and coasts, a ready means to do so. This includes those who live, work and spend leisure time in coastal areas, as well as those who live "upstream" but understand that their actions can have a tremendous impact on coastal resources. Moreover, the process ensures that specific sectors—the scientific and academic, resource management, environmental protection, and industrial and development communities, for example—have the opportunity to get involved. The National Dialogues are overseen by the participating organizations. The partners are responsible for

selecting, planning and producing specific activities. They encourage individuals and groups to participate, and initiate supporting activities. Other national organizations are also encouraged to become partners in the National Dialogues.

### National Dialogues Activities

**Ocean Policy Dialogues.** With 1998 deemed the Year of the Ocean, the National Dialogues partners encouraged dispassionate discussion of national ocean and coastal issues and policies. A roundtable in May 1998, arranged by the University of Delaware and the Ocean Governance Study Group, compared and contrasted the major ocean policy issues facing the nation now with those of 30 years ago. For more information, contact the Center for the Study of Marine Policy, University of Delaware, phone 302.831.8086; e-mail Johnston@udel.edu

**National Newsletter and Coastal Trends Workshop.** A national newsletter was initiated to encourage discussion and knowledge of ocean and coastal policy issues; more than 1,000 managers and practitioners now receive the *Ocean and Coastal Policy Network News*. In January 1999, a national workshop examined future trends that will affect U.S. national ocean and coastal policy for the next 25 years. For more information on

### The National Dialogues Partners include:

- American Association of Port Authorities
- Boat Owners Association of the United States
- Center for Marine Conservation
- The Coastal Society
- Coastal States Organization
- Consortium for Oceanographic Research and Education
- Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations
- National Fisheries Institute
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- National Ocean Industries Association

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**Forum on the Future of Coastal Stewardship.** Coastal stewards from industry, environmental organizations, universities, and all levels of government convened in March 1999 to discuss the future of coastal stewardship. Audience response technology enabled the participants to respond immediately and anonymously as information was presented to them. They prioritized trends and issues, and appraised their consequences, for the future of coastal stewardship.

**Coastal Futures 2025: A Vision for Sustainable Coastal and Maritime Communities.** The National Dialogues partners have collaborated on a vision for the future and are actively engaged in discussions about how to achieve this vision. The vision statement can be found on-line at <http://state-of-coast.noaa.gov>. From July to October 1999, all are encouraged to participate in this interactive Web site by sharing their perspective and comments.

**Other Dialogues.** National Dialogues partners have begun to explore how they can work together to restore and enhance coastal and marine habitats. The partners are also interested in improving dredging projects, including the management of dredged material throughout the United States. The hallmark of these and other National Dialogues activities is that they are stakeholder-driven. NOAA's role is to coordinate and facilitate the dialogues.

## Continuing the Dialogues

The National Dialogues may have widespread implications. Efforts to inform the public about coastal conditions, and to encourage companies, organizations and individuals to be informed coastal stewards, will become ever more important. While this challenge is now well recognized,

## National Dialogues Activities

- Futures Forums—open discussions of trends and issues
- A stakeholder-led process to develop visions and strategies for implementation
- Extensive use of the World Wide Web to engage a wide spectrum of stakeholders
- A variety of events and products to heighten interest and participation.

the task is enormous and continuous. The National Dialogues provide an opportunity to consider how we will address this emerging challenge.

A shared vision about the future of the coast will enrich our understanding of the importance of quality of life and community values. It will provide a point of reference to be consulted when economic and environmental interests need to be balanced. The process of developing the vision and engaging in wide-ranging dialogue involves many stakeholders and provides an opportunity for coastal stewards from all sectors to integrate and respond to policy and regulatory developments that bear on coastal management.

The National Dialogues on Coastal

Stewardship will be most successful if they are ongoing and evolve as a result of the participants' needs and interests. Wise coastal stewardship demands insights into (1) recognizing the most pressing problems impacting the nation's coastal resources; and (2) strong leadership in advancing the sustainable use of our coastal systems to support economic prosperity and environmental well-being. New approaches that bridge the gap between science, management and public policy, and that forge partnerships through integration, coordination and empowerment of all stakeholders, are likely to be the keys to long-term success.

## For More Information

National organizations that are responsible for, or interested in, coastal stewardship are encouraged to become partners in the National Dialogues and to suggest and initiate additional dialogues in partnership with others. For more information, contact Charles Bookman, phone 301.713.3000, ext. 124; e-mail [Charles.Bookman@noaa.gov](mailto:Charles.Bookman@noaa.gov)

Reports and summaries of completed activities, and information about current and upcoming activities, are available on the National Dialogues home page:

<http://state-of-coast.noaa.gov>

